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## Adapting to Swedish culture and society

On the following page, you will find information and support in regards to moving to a new country and integrating into a new culture.

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## Summary

- There may be social and cultural differences between Sweden and your home country. It may take some time and feel difficult in the beginning as you are adapting to Swedish culture.

- Adjusting to another culture often affects a person's identity. This is a normal reaction.
- It is important to pay attention to the children's reactions during resettlement and to give them support.

- Be prepared to change roles and responsibilities within the family.
- The process of integration, adjusting to the new society, is ongoing even after you have arrived in Sweden.
- Be prepared to experience cultural differences.

## Cultural differences and Swedish culture

There are often big differences between cultures. It may be good to prepare yourself for new norms and values in Sweden that you are not accustomed to.

It is difficult to define what is typically Swedish or part of Swedish culture. In every part of the world, country and within ethnic groups, there are cultural values that for many, but not all, create a sense of belonging. Thoughts and ideas on what is considered to be typically Swedish for one person is therefore not necessarily shared by other Swedes.

### Typically Swedish?

Many may associate Sweden with Zlatan, the football player, or maybe the furniture store IKEA. Certain characteristics can be thought of as distinctive for Sweden and the Swedes. For example, most people possess a strong trust in the government and authorities. There is a high level of trust in government decisions, the judicial system and government officials. In addition, corruption is low in Sweden.

Additionally many Swedes often feel strongly that it is important to protect nature, and visitors often feel that Sweden's environment is very clean. People from other countries sometimes experience Swedes as reserved and difficult to connect with.

### To become part of Swedish society

Moving to another country is an extraordinary event that may result in many thoughts and emotions. It may be stressful. All of this is normal. It takes time, requires drive, motivation and determination to become part of a new society.

Often, things feel good at first, with a new country and new opportunities. After a while, things may feel difficult when learning a new language, getting used to a new culture and experiencing homesickness. Mostly, things change gradually as you meet new friends, integrate and learn the new language.

It is important to remember that everyone experiences the adaption to Swedish society in different ways and it may take a different amount of time. It is important that you try to take care of yourself, since stress for long periods is not good for your health.

[Read more about how you take care of your physical health and what help is available if you are not feeling well.](#)

### Identity

Your identity are your thoughts about yourself and who you are as a person. Your identity is created by you and by what happens around you. Some parts of your identity may change during the resettlement process. Sometimes the changes may be difficult to handle and it is good to be prepared. This is normal and may happen when you encounter new social structures, traditions, values, skills, professions and hobbies.

In Sweden, the roles and responsibilities in a family or a relationship may change. For example, both men and women are expected to work and help with the household and children.

Since women are also expected to work or study, both parents need to help each other with child-rearing, cooking, cleaning, errands and shopping. It is common that partners collaborate regarding the household's finances, share costs and have their own bankcards.

All people in Sweden, regardless of gender and age, have the same rights and enjoy the same amount of respect. Women take an active role in Sweden, both in society and in the workplace. Women can have a career and a family. They can also hold high positions and be political leaders. In Sweden, it is normal and common to be a single parent. Even if the parents have separated and no longer live together, they are often friends and collaborate around their children.

### Effects of resettlement on children

Children usually find it easier to adapt to new situations and the same applies to integration into Swedish society. They often learn the language faster and can make friends at school or preschool. But children can also feel stress.

It is important that legal guardians pay attention to their children's reactions and feelings and talk to them about their experiences.

Even though children can learn the language faster, they should not interpret for their legal guardians when they are in contact with authorities, healthcare workers or at school. There should be a professional interpreter present in these situations, and you can request an interpreter if you need one.

### To live with several cultures

Adults already have an established identity, while young people are still forming theirs. This can sometimes be a source of conflict in families.

It is important for guardians to respect young people's experiences. It is also acceptable and natural for young people to embrace swedish culture and swedish values. It is still possible to celebrate one's traditions with the young.

When young people adapt more quickly to swedish culture, conflicts may arise between them and their legal guardians. It is always important to talk to your child and try to solve the problems. There is help available through your municipality or through social services if you feel that you need help talking to your child.

### **Diskussionsfrågor**

- What changes do you think you need to make to adapt to life in Sweden?
- What would you do to take care of your well-being and handle stress?
- What does society look like in your home country? Is it individualistic, as in Sweden, or more community-oriented?

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